

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Captain Jack-Olinda Helicopter Landing Zones for Spacer Replacement ⁺

Project No.: 100495358

Project Manager: Dean Faller

Location: Rural north-central Shasta County, CA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action:

Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region (WAPA) is responsible for the operation and maintenance of several federally owned and operated transmission lines throughout California, including the Captain Jack-Olinda (CPJ-ODA) line, located in northeast California. Part of this responsibility includes ensuring WAPA maintains reliable operation of the transmission system.

WAPA proposes emergency replacement of spacers on selected spans of its CPJ-ODA transmission line. One failed component was identified on Tower 387 during a recent surveillance patrol. Other spacers along the CPJ-ODA in this area will be replaced in 2023.

To accomplish this task, WAPA intends to use one of two helicopter landing zones near the WAPA right-of-way (ROW) for landing and as staging areas. One location has been a previously used landing zone by WAPA and owned by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) within a broad pullout along an access road to the Pit #6 Reservoir powerhouse, on Short Creek, west of Tower 456. The other location is on private land south of Grizzly Peak along a dirt access road and east of Tower 387.

Findings:

In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, Jul. 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), WAPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, WAPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

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Saare

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Attachment: Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

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Project Site Description

The two proposed project areas are in rural Shasta County, California, one approximately 6 miles north of the town of Round Mountain and the other 18 miles further north near Grizzly Peak.

The dominant habitat surrounding the project area consists of mixed conifer, secondary-growth, forest. One landing zone is a broad pullout along an access road to the Pit #6 Reservoir powerhouse on Short Creek. This location is about half mile west of CPJ-ODA Tower 456. This site is routinely used as a helicopter landing zone/staging area by Pacific Gas & Electric for maintaining their lines. The second landing zone is further north near Grizzly Peak, off Grizzly Peak Road, about quarter mile east of Tower 387. These landing zones will be utilized about 7 times for this area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

**Environmental Resource
Impacts**

**No Potential for
Significance**

**No Potential for Significance,
with Conditions**

1. **Historic and Cultural Resources**

Explanation:



The PGE-owned landing zone is previously disturbed and routinely used as a landing zone. WAPA conducted a survey of this area on April 29, 2021, and Grizzly Peak was surveyed August 22, 2019; no cultural resource concerns were identified. The Grizzly Peak landing zone adjacent to the Grizzly Peak Road and access road is within a previously disturbed area. Natural Resources will be contacted immediately if archeological, paleontological, or historic evidence is found.



2. **Geology and Soils**

Explanation:



Ground disturbance is not anticipated in this project; therefore, no impacts would occur.

3. **Plants** (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Explanation:



No special-status plants are known or expected at the project sites, although sensitive plant species are in the general area. The landing zone sites are sparsely vegetated disturbed pullouts along a public road. Construction vehicles and equipment would be required to be clean before entering the project location to prevent spread of invasive weeds.

4. **Wildlife** (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Explanation:



Although the project lies within the range of federally-protected northern spotted owl, the forest surrounding the project area lacks the complexity of suitable habitat for the species. WAPA conducted a survey of the project area on April 29, 2021, and August 22, 2019 and found no resources of concern. Work is proposed in Fall and Winter time frame outside the bird nesting season.

However, northern spotted owl (NSO) are in the area. NSO Project Conservation Measures (PCM) do not allow for noise disturbing work from February 1- July 31. At the PGE-owned site, NSO activity is about 2.5 miles away. Work should be performed prior to February 1. Biologists will advise WAPA crews/pilots to avoid approach/departure flights which would come within a mile of known spotted owl occurrences.

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish**
(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Explanation:



Short Creek is 900 feet west of the PGE-owned site; however, the project landing zone site does not have any water bodies, floodplains, or fish. The Grizzly Peak site also does not have any water bodies. No impacts would occur.

6. **Wetlands**
Explanation:



The project area does not have wetlands; therefore, no impacts would occur.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**
Explanation:



Spill prevention measures, including secondary containment at the landing zone, will be used during operations. The project would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination. In the event of a hazardous material/waste spill, Environment and the COR will be contacted, WAPA Dispatch notified, and the appropriate Federal, State, and local regulating authority notified depending on the type and size of the spill

8. **Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**
Explanation:



The land use would not change at the project sites. Nor is the project within, or near, any specially designated areas, such as National Scenic Rivers.

9. **Visual Quality**
Explanation:



The visual quality would be consistent with the existing use of the transmission right-of-way corridor. There would be no significant change to the visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**
Explanation:



Air quality emissions would be from short-term helicopter use to and from individual towers and spans and exhaust from worker's vehicles along access roads. Each event will be 1 to 2 weeks duration. Air quality helicopter emissions based on modeling 14 total flight days for total of 7 events were within the emissions criteria for Shasta County AQMD. The contractor is expected to adopt WAPA's procedures during the project:

AQ-SOP-1: The Contractor will adhere to all applicable requirements of those agencies having jurisdiction over air quality matters, and any necessary permits for O&M will be obtained.

AQ-SOP-2: Machinery and vehicles will be kept in good operating condition and older equipment will be replaced with equipment meeting applicable emission standards; appropriate emissions-control equipment will be maintained for vehicles and equipment, per EPA and/or WAPA air-emission requirements.

AQ-SOP-3: Idle equipment will be shut down when not in active use; visible emissions from stationary generators will be controlled.

AQ-SOP-4: Dust –control measures will be implemented in road construction and maintenance, as needed. Trucks transporting loose material will be covered or maintain at least two feet of freeboard and will not create any visible dust emissions.

AQ-SOP-5: There will be no open burning of construction trash.

AQ-SOP-6: Grading activities will cease during periods of high winds (as determined by local air quality management districts).

AQ-SOP-7: Major operations will be avoided on days when the local Air Quality Index is expected to exceed 150.

AQ-SOP-8: Include dust-control measures such as water or chemical suppressants.

AQ-SOP-9: Re-seeding of ground surfaces that have been significantly disturbed to prevent wind dispersion of soil.

AQ-SOP-10: Regular watering of exposed soils and unpaved access roads during maintenance activities.

AQ-SOP-11: Use reasonably practicable methods and devices to control, prevent, and otherwise minimize atmospheric emissions or discharges of air contaminants.

11. **Noise**



Explanation:

There are no residences within the project location. Helicopter noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety. Contractor shall be required to follow the OSHA standards set forth in 29 CFR 1910.269. Contractor shall also adhere to the requirements under Title 8 Cal OSHA Electrical Safety Order specifically Subchapter 5 and Subchapter 7. Contractor shall maintain a safe working distance from conductors as described in the above OSHA standards. If a safe working distance cannot be maintained, a clearance shall be requested 3 days in advance.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

- ☒ Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation, if necessary:

- ☒ Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- ☒ Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation, if necessary:

- ☒ Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: WAPA would work closely with the landowners to provide adequate notification of construction timing.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed: **Latisha M. Saare**

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